



The Connecticut General Assembly

Dear Friend:

The 2004 legislative session officially convenes on February 2nd. While it is primarily centered on budgetary items, many other key issues will certainly be raised.

Thankfully in 2003, the legislature acted and closed the projected one billion dollar deficit. Some painful and tough decisions were made, which pales in comparison to what could have happened had we failed to act. We are not totally out of the woods, but it puts us in a much stronger position this year.

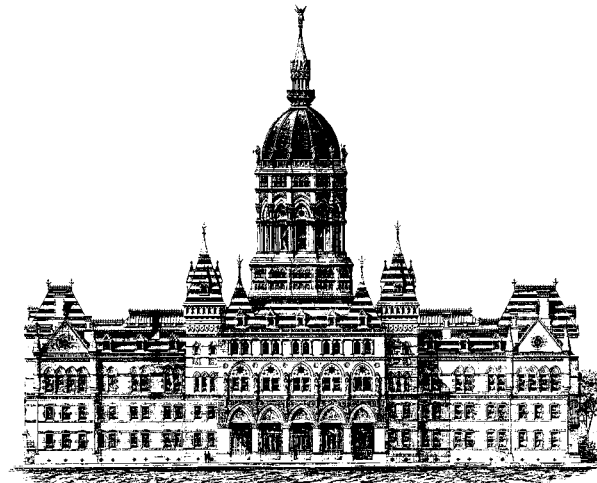
As always, I seek your comments, opinions and advice. It is my honor to be your representative to the state legislature and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Bob Duff

State Representative Bob Duff

Standing Up for Norwalk



Legislative Update:
2004

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State Representative Bob Duff

Bills I will introduce:

2004 Legislative Session



Performance Based Budget. Changing our budget process. This would help save taxpayer dollars while maximizing funds already spent (see adjacent article).



Senior Relief. To exempt Medicare co-payments from qualifying income when seniors apply for property tax relief.



Helping Pregnant Women. Because of a call I received from a neighbor, I was alerted that temporary handicapped permits should be available to at-risk pregnant women.



Zero Car Emissions for Clean Air. At no cost to consumers or taxpayers, our state must adopt these California standards that are already in place in New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts. Cleaning up the air we breathe should always be a priority.



Targeting Speeders. To add a surcharge to speeding tickets sending the revenue back to municipalities. Currently, all money collected goes to the state's general fund.



Preventing Drug Abuse. The Model Drug Dealer Liability Act (www.modelddla.com). This allows the drug dealers to be tried in civil court and have their assets seized. It is successful in other states and stops the vicious circle of drug dependence.



Ideas? If you have any ideas or comments on any of these topics or legislation that you would like me to consider, please feel free to contact me.

Goal:

An Efficient State Government

I believe our state government can be more efficient. With a recession, deficits and many being asked to do more with less, funding for state programs should be based on effectiveness and the ability to set and achieve goals. It's called performance budgeting.

The concept of performance budgeting is fairly simple. Each program would set measurable goals and track past performance. Under-performing line items would be cut and superstars could be rewarded. Performance budgeting would change the entire culture of state government, and change the way citizens view bureaucracy.

Performance budgeting has success stories in Texas, Florida and Louisiana. In New England, Maine is transitioning to a performance-based system. With a performance-based budget there is more accountability because department heads must map out objectives and answer tough questions when programs don't perform as planned. Oversight is easier because there is data of past performance. This style of budgeting makes it easier to focus on citizens' needs by eliminating under-utilized programs and shifting funding to programs that are firing on all cylinders.

In Connecticut we have no way of measuring a program's effectiveness when department heads present their funding requests. I want to change that. Performance budgeting makes sense. It is a concept whose time has come.



Fixing ConnPACE

Prescription Drug Assistance for Seniors

I voted **NO** on weakening ConnPACE this year and endangering seniors' ability to receive prescription drugs. Unfortunately, this menacing bill passed and is now law with the governor's signature.

I was particularly concerned with the **"Estate Recovery"** provision in the bill. The act allows the state to recoup from the estates of deceased ConnPACE participants the money it paid to help them with their prescription expenses. It applies to deaths on or after September 1, 2003 and allows recoupment of benefits the deceased person actually received on or after July 1, 2003.

The **"Asset Test"** was another section, which could affect many seniors living in Norwalk. It sets the "available" asset limit at \$100,000 for single participants and \$125,000 for married couples. Available assets are those other than cars or homes.

I will be fighting very hard this session to repeal this Draconian law. I voted **NO** because it is unfair to balance the budget on the backs of the seniors in our community. Feel free to contact me should you have any questions or if you would like updates on the repeal.

Keep in Touch!

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